

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 28, 2024

**SB 691 - Higher Education - Firefighters and EMS Recruitment and Retention -
Scholarship and Loan Repayment Assistance**

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland's 16 community colleges, strongly supports **SB 691**, which expands an existing scholarship program and establish a new loan repayment program for Maryland's firefighters and emergency medical services (EMS).

First and foremost, firefighters and emergency medical services (EMS) providers play a vital role in ensuring public safety and well-being. They risk their lives daily to protect communities from fires, accidents, and other emergencies. By supporting loan forgiveness programs, we recognize and appreciate their dedication and sacrifice.

Additionally, investing in the education and professional development of firefighters and EMS providers strengthens the emergency services workforce. These individuals require specialized training and certification to effectively perform their duties. By alleviating the burden of student loans, we make it more feasible for individuals to pursue careers in these critical fields, thereby ensuring that our communities have a skilled and capable emergency response team.

Furthermore, loan forgiveness programs can help address recruitment and retention challenges within the firefighting and EMS profession. Many individuals may be deterred from pursuing careers in these fields due to the high cost of education and the burden of student debt. By offering financial incentives such as loan forgiveness, we can attract more qualified candidates to these professions and encourage experienced professionals to remain in the field.

In conclusion, supporting loan forgiveness programs for firefighters is not only a gesture of appreciation for their service but also a strategic investment in public safety and workforce development. Accordingly, MACC urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** vote on **SB 691**.

For questions, please contact Brad Phillips (bphillips@mdacc.org) or Drew Jabin (djabin@mdacc.org).